

# Higher Education as Formation of the Self and Citizenship. An Ethnography of the University Students from Amman, Jordan

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## Abstract /Resumen

My interest in higher education and citizenship in the Middle East at large and in Jordan in particular is fostered by some of the reflections Eickelman proposed (1992). Being a quite recent phenomenon, intimately linked with the more general topic of state formation it seemed to me more suitable to study it in a little country with a recent history (a field study left almost unexplored until now as far as Jordan is concerned, to the best of my knowledge, since Antoun 1994 focuses on the migration as a quest for higher education). The process of state formation in Jordan is quite studied.

I thus intended to study the higher education policies as an attempt both to create a national citizenry and more recently as a way of controlling the more problematic part of the population (youth, which constitutes more than the double of the population. See UNDP and Ministry of Planning 2000). How do the young students enter the university system, and in which way does this system work? How is this system designed, in order to retain social control of the students (since they are usually perceived to be a factor of social and political instability, as in Iran or in Egypt)? Is there any significant difference between different faculties? And if so, why?

My conclusions at this stage are that the university system is an integral part of the survival of the regime. The system works quite well, and Jordan has one of the best educational position in the region. Yet there are important distinctions to be made: the access to the better faculties is socially selective while the less valued faculties are left to the poorer and less wealthy youth. This results in a different treatment of the students and of the courses that I analysed. In the better faculties the teaching standards are quite high, and the relationship between professors and students is almost on a same-level base, while in the less privileged faculties the opposite is true. Thus we can observe a concrete politics of *divide et impera* intended to split the youth in two. For the more privileged there are some freedoms, both within and outside classes, designed I guess at forging them as autonomous individuals. On the opposite the less privileged are kept under tight control, even if also these students are a privileged category among youth at large.

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**Keywords/Palabras clave:** higher education, citizenship

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Higher education is, in Jordan as elsewhere in the world, a topic which is frequently addressed by the king and the authorities in general, and whose well-being is normally associated with the very same well-being of the nation itself (see Eickelman 1992). Being Jordan one of the few countries in the Middle East which is not exporting oil or other significant natural resources, what is named “the human resource” – as spoken of by the king itself in many speeches – is the only exportable good which can assure the economy and the political significance of the country. The universities in Jordan – at least until the ‘90s – have been financed by the State that in this way retained the control over this potentially subversive institution, by carefully looking after what and how was taught, who has access at the professorship and even, to a certain extent, of who could enter the university as a student and who could not, and so on. Therefore, (higher) education itself can be seen as one of the most powerful instrument state power has in order to build and maintain social cohesion and control it. As Bourdieu put it: “programmed individuals – equipped with an homogeneous program of perception, thought, and action – are the most specific output of an educational system” (Bourdieu 1967:340). The transmission of knowledge is thus to be seen not only as the transmission of “the right culture and the right way of approaching it” (*op.cit.*:350), but also as the transmission of the principles that govern a given society. In the case of Jordan, this is pointed out by the national chart (9<sup>th</sup> April 1988) that states: “higher education has the duty to contribute to the development of an individual in his entirety, believer in God and in the *Umma*, having and independent and creative thought” (quoted in Bader 1994:8).

The interest in such a topic involves very different issues, some of them more related to education broadly conceived while others being more inherent to discourses such as state formation and its attempt to control the technologies of the self of its citizens. Studying such topics in Jordan is more favourable due to its relatively small size and its recent history that makes such a research more historically complete. Jordan has one of the best educational position in the region, with 87% of literacy in its overall population (the average for other Arab countries is 59%), and only 3% illiteracy in the age 15-30. Primary education is virtually universal, and there are no significant differences in gender. In 2000 almost 35% of the population was enrolled at the various steps of the education system – about 1,6 million on 4,6 inhabitants, and 140,000 students at the university level (UNDP 2000). These achievements are supported by international donors. The social relevance of higher education in Jordan cannot thus be underestimated. Not only topics linked to reform and liberalisation of universities are publicly debated even on newspapers and televisions, but the removal of the head of the University of Jordan in 2004 was decided in a few days by the king himself – and to this followed endless speculations on the reasons behind this move.

The university of Jordan, the one on which I focused in my study, is the older institution of this kind in this country<sup>1</sup>. It was established in 1962, in what at the time constituted an area outside the capital Amman, and at its beginning counted on only one faculty, that of literature, 167 students only 18 of which were female and 8 professors. In the academic year 2003/2004 the students were somewhere around 32,000 and women constituted about half of the total, while there were more than a thousand professors; the faculties were 18 and there were 83 departments (source: University of Jordan yearbook 2005). In the same year Jordan counted something like 20 universities

scattered all around the country about the half of which were private – established within the last ten years (see al-Rashdan, ‘A, e Hamshri, ‘O., 2003:367).

The campus itself of the University of Jordan reflects its importance on a national level. It is quite a separate space in the context of the “greater Amman” – which is increasingly growing since the ‘80s due to the combined effects of return of immigrants from the Gulf where they no longer can find easily jobs considered adequate and the steady growth of the population. The campus area is on one of the highest hills at the northern edge of the capital, and it is surrounded by walls and its entrances are controlled by unarmed guards. This idea of separateness, of a discontinuity that characterizes the green and well-kept area of the campus from the chaotic city is a marker of the social significance of the university as something different from the outside world. Even inside the campus differences between the different faculties’ buildings are quite clear, and lots of visibility is given to externally founded institutions such as the local branch of the University of the United Nations and some other building financed by mainly by USA and Japan. The presence of the international founders is even more strong within certain faculties, such engineering or the high studies faculty (the last has programs in women studies, American studies and environment). Then there is the presence of the state power itself, less evident yet quite important with centres like the department of military sciences which has some courses compulsory for all students of both sexes. I argue here that the distinction with the external world and the differences within the campus are promoted and sustained by state power in order to make it clear which are the priorities and which are not.

### **Admission to the university**

Let us turn now to give a closer look at how the University of Jordan is working. The choice of the faculty is not free, since it depends on the grades the students get in their *tawjihi* (the final exam at the end of secondary school, expressed in hundreds). Faculties are divided into scientific and humanistic ones, and they are ordered by the *majlis al-jami’i* (the academic senate) from the first to the lower rank. Every year there might be some changes, yet in the scientific curriculum the more required faculties are normally medicine and engineering (followed by pharmacy, the newly established information technology school, sciences, agricultural sciences) while within the humanities literature gets the first place, followed by business administration, social sciences, law, educational sciences, *shari’a*, to the last which is physical education).

For the average students, the faculty in which they will be enrolled depends on the grades they get at the *tawjihi*, as said. To give an example, in order to enter the faculty of medicine in 2003 the minimum required was 95 out of 100, while to enter literature a 92 was enough. The minimum required to enter the faculties at the bottom of the scale was slightly more than the minimum required to pass the *tawjihi* itself. The relevance of *tawjihi* at a national level cannot be underestimated, since it is widely perceived to be one of the very few collective moments in which an individual is evaluated in a way considered “objective” and fair – being the general context of Jordan much more permeated by the social capital one gets from his/her belonging to an important extended family and/or by his/her ability to get a good *wasta* (intermediary, a person that can found you a job, a nice house, and the like). When this exam ends, at the beginning of July normally, Amman is animated by many *shabab* (guys, young people) who passed the *tawjihi* that spend the night partying their success, and for some days after in the newspapers there are listed the names of those who performed better.



The one I briefly described insofar is yet only one of the ways to get into the University of Jordan. There are other two, one set up in the last years and the other as old as the university itself. The older possibility is the one of the *makrumat*. If a student is son/daughter of a teacher or an employee at the university, or if he/she is the son/daughter of someone working in the army or belonging to the *diwan al-maliki* (a kind of royal court), then he/she belongs to the *makrumat* (roughly translated as categories) which are granted an easier access to the university by way of their relatedness to the state. The mechanism works as for “normal” students, that is to say the access to the different faculties is not free but since the students of the *makrumat* are less the competition is softer: for example in the year 2001 the daughter of a teacher got admitted at literature even if her grade at the *tawjihi* was just 69 (the minimum for “normal” students was 92). The *makrumat* students don’t pay university fees – which for the “normal” ones are around 150 Jordanian Dinars per semester, with the average salary being somewhere around 200JD (220€). These advantages are dependent on the general attitude of the Jordanian state toward its employees – about half the total workforce – to guarantee them with easily accessed services, such as school, hospitals, supermarkets with prices lower than the average, and other benefits. As Massad (2001) noted, this is one of the ways in which the state tries to get the control over its population, by giving them work and means of sustenance – an attitude which in the last years has been lessened by the massive interventions of the IMF following the huge economic crisis of the late ‘80s, but that it retains until now its strength as a factor of social cohesion and political stability in a state that can be well described as neo-patriarchal and having a *rentier* economy (see Bank and Schlumberger 2004).

The third category of the students has to deal with the processes of liberalisation that are occurring in the country especially since the beginning of the reign of Abdallah II. This has led to the opening to private universities which are in fact mushrooming all around the country, and to a new possibility of getting admitted to the more prestigious university in the Kingdom, the University of Jordan. Since 2002 has been introduced the category of the “evening students”; they get admitted to any faculty (with the notable exception of the faculties of the medical area) with only 65% of the grade of the *tawjihi* required for the “normal” students. This of course makes it easier to get admitted on the faculty that one chooses. They are called “evening” students because in the first year of this reform it was planned that they would have done their classes after 5pm, a measure taken in order to weaken the opposition of the other students to their admission. Yet as early as the second year they were perfectly assimilated to the other students, followed the same classes and contribute to the worsening of the problem of the registration to courses<sup>2</sup>. The main explanation for them being admitted is the change in the financial situation of the universities, whose budgets in the last years are not fully covered by the state. Thus they have to seek some other source of income, and the “evening students” are one of the major. They pay approximately 850JD per semester, more than seven times a “normal” students. It is of course a sum which is unaffordable for the vast majority of the families, and much nearer to the sum required by private universities – but the prestige of the University of Jordan makes it a much more preferred choice for many.

These categories are examples of the politics carried on by the state. The *makrumat* are then to be seen as “protégé” by the state, at least as far as education is concerned, while the “evening” students are the new category that is coming from the

new liberalizing policies brought forth by the regime, sometimes against its own desires. The “normal” students are those who more overtly denounce this trend, as elsewhere in the world. As Foucault noted, “the political praxis doesn’t have a thaumaturgic creative role” (Foucault 1991:68), so we should be careful about the danger of generalizing their effects. Yet it seems to me clear that state power in the modern age does not control its citizenry by repression but mainly through a production of them as subjects used to submit themselves to the power of the state. This idea, which is used by Joseph Massad in his study (2001) on how the combined effects of law and the army contributed to the formation of the state in Jordan, is completed by Antonio Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, which he sees as having the function of producing a “spontaneous” consensus among the masses for the policies brought forth by the elites. “Schools and media, through which education becomes institutionalised, become [...] privileged ways to strengthen the disciplined normalisation of the population” (Massad 2001:4).

### **Disparity among faculties within the University of Jordan**

The monarchs of Jordan claim direct descent from the prophet Muhammad, being *sharif*, noble descendant of the inhabitants of Mecca during the prophet’s life. Ever since the beginning of their authority on the land of today Jordan, in 1921 under the British mandate, they based their authority on the claim of being Muslim, morally responsible for the Arab people as a whole and for the Muslim holy places that are in Jerusalem. Therefore they claim to have a special attention to the preservation of Muslim “traditions” at home, while at the same time as abovementioned they are promoting an image of a “moderate” Arab Muslim country, allied to the Americans and with a strong public rhetoric on development of the citizenry and of the economy<sup>3</sup>.

I argue that this ambivalence reflects in the higher education system as well, in the way the university is organized but also in its very teaching methodologies. The admission procedures themselves reveal how much the system is internally differentiated; a student of the faculty of literature will be very different – and treated differently – than a student of *shari’a*. The system admits certain exceptions, that is to say even a student coming from the less wealthy areas of the country can have access to the better faculties, by way of his/her *tawjihi* grade. The opposite though is unconceivable, e.g. wealthy students won’t be found in the less privileged faculties; if they don’t have the minimum required, they can always enter the university as “evening” students, or they can enrol in private universities.

This difference is highly visible, since students of literature and business administration socialize through patterns that are more similar to what Comaroff and Comaroff (2000) define the “homogenized cultural practices of the global youth”. Even if *muhajabat* (women veiled with a scarf that covers hairs and neck) are present, they are few and they tend either not to socialize at all – refusing the setting in which they are – or to socialize as the other students. In the low grade faculties, however, this kind of behaviour is seldom accepted; male and female students tend to stay much more separated, almost all the women are at least *muhajabat* if not completely veiled – usually wearing an ‘*abaya*, a long mantel that covers all the body, as well as the *hijab* of course. I don’t want to suggest that veiling and being of modest origin are always to be found together, nor that there is any kind of relationship between veiling and being less “free” of behaving; on the contrary I personally met many female students that were notable exceptions. Even if we don’t have time to enter into this problem today, I would



like to mention that this problem reflects also within classes. It is not unusual in the lower grade faculties to hear professors shouting at *muhajabat*, telling them that the only good thing that they will achieve in their lives would be going back to their villages, getting married and having and nurturing children, with no reaction by the students; needless to say, such a behaviour would not be tolerated in the better faculties. It is, as we will see more in detail while examining some classes, not only a matter of social status but more a matter of different policies applied to different segments of the population which are best kept separated.

The other important distinction to be named is the one between scientific and humanistic faculties. As we said before there is a great insistence on this divide from the admission to the university – a student coming from a scientific high school can choose both curricula, while one coming from humanistic high school can only enter in the humanistic faculties. A former head of the University of Jordan, in 2004 professor at educational sciences, wrote an article on the way he sees the essential difference between students in the humanistic and scientific faculties. According to him, the scientific student is interested in learning and willing to promote change even at a societal level, while the humanistic student is less motivated and interested, since the only reason to pursue this career is to have failed the access to the scientific one (Khasawneh 2001). From a social point of view it is generally true that the students of the scientific faculties are less differentiated among themselves, coming mainly from the same middle class (broadly defined) and mainly from Amman; in the humanistic faculties, on the opposite, there seems to be more discrepancies among students of different faculties, as we had briefly said, and more geographical diversification. I am not interested in discussing the validity of such a thesis. From a theoretical point of view, this distinction operates a cut between what is new, valuable, noteworthy, and what is old, less interesting, less important. This discourse has to be linked to the development rhetoric brought forth by the regime. The fact that scientific lessons are taught entirely in English – while the humanistic ones are mainly in Arabic – might well underline the idea that English is the language of science, technology and development, in a country in which the king speaks English better than Arabic.

Let us now turn to the analysis of the teaching methodologies. I will conclude by presenting some examples of lessons in some different faculties.

### Teaching methodologies

At present the teaching methodologies used in the lower grade faculties are designed to the production of a knowledge which is adherent to what professors and the books read in classes say, as reveals an analysis of the evaluation systems. In Jordan students are not supposed to be examined on an oral basis, not even at the *tawjihi* level. The official explanation for this points out to the objectivity that a written exams offers, in comparison to an oral one. The exams – two in the course of the semester – are thus entirely written, usually with short questions that are to be answered using the words contained in the textbooks or following what the professor said in class. In this way also another important aspect of the teaching methodologies, that of developing in the students what is labelled “critical writing”, is cut off, since there is no duty of presenting papers nor any kind of original work. Only in the better faculties there is the requirement of producing some papers, and in these faculties usually also in the exams



there are open questions that are designed to let the student express his/her views on the topics studied.

The studies are completed, following the American model, when a student finishes his/her exams. There is not a thesis to be discussed nor a commission of professors in front of which to defend one's work. The end of the curriculum is marked by an elaborated ceremony, usually held in the university stadium – normally attended by the king or the queen or by some other members of the royal family, another sign of the importance of such an institution in the public life of this country – in which the students, grouped in their faculties, are given their *shahadat* (the university degree), being called by name and presenting themselves in front of the king and the head of the university and the dean of their faculties, while their relatives and friends support them as spectators do in sport events<sup>4</sup>.

The main exception to this are the courses, compulsory for the students of all faculties, of Arabic and English language, which of course presume that the students present a topic chosen by them. The choice is free, but cannot regard politics or religion nor matters that are covered by '*ʿib* (shame), such as sex relations and the like. Not unsurprisingly, the students find this task – speaking for fifteen minutes in a foreign language<sup>5</sup> – extremely challenging, since they are not only not used to express themselves in public, but more strikingly they are never asked to be listened to topic chosen by themselves. The other main exception is represented by some young professors who obtained their PhDs in foreign universities and that try to apply some methodologies which are normally used in the US or in Britain to their students. All of those I had the opportunity to meet, however, complain about the hardships that they face within their faculties when trying to change this system. Complaints are to be heard by almost every student in the better faculties, while in the lower grade ones it is rare to have a conversation on these issues. If there are complaints, the students are not comfortable to express their views. Yet I guess that one of the aims of this system is to discourage them to criticize openly not only within the university but in their daily lives as well.

I do not want to judge the “reality” of the university system in Jordan. On the contrary what I try to describe are my impressions, alongside with the reflections proposed by my informants, professors and students alike I had the chance to meet. It is a common understanding, at least among students, that the better faculties enjoy professors that are usually more qualified, as it is a common saying among professors of the low grade faculties that their students are not interested in studying but only in getting their *shahadat*.

I will present here an analysis of some classes I attended in different faculties, in order to give some fieldwork insights to support what I have been stating insofar.



### Analysis of some lessons: Shari'a

The faculty of Islamic Law, as we saw, is among those of lower grade in the humanities. The students are mostly female, mainly daughters of pious families who see religious education as the best choice for a Muslim girl who wants to get married in a "proper" way. The male students are usually the *imam*-to-be, that is to say that their future jobs will be within the ministry of *awqaf* (pious endowments) as *imam* or *sheikh* of the state-run mosques<sup>6</sup>. They will be paid by the government as public officials, as it is the case in most of the modern Arab nations throughout the Middle East in an attempt to prevent mosques to become centres of political activism against the regimes.

In the context of the campus of the University of Jordan the faculty of *shari'a* represents quite a different world, as many students of other faculties kept mentioning to me. Contacts between sexes are strictly forbidden, and professors and other university employees are expected to prevent any contact from taking place. As I discovered taking the wrong one, male and female students have separate stairs that lead to the upper floors of the building, where most of the classes are held – the first floor is almost entirely devoted to a large room which serves as a mosque, the fact that the university has an official one notwithstanding. In the corridors male and female students don't mix up at all. The girls are all wearing the '*abaya*', and some of them are completely covered from toes to hairs by a black robe that covers also the eyes, while boys are almost all wearing the *jalabeyya*, the long dress for men that is rare in Amman, left alone those who lived in the Gulf and the poorer ones. Having access to such a faculty was possible only through a friend from Turkey who at the time was at the university pursuing her PhD research in Muslim rites.

Classes are held in hemicycles rooms, with male students sitting in the first row and female ones, roughly seven times more, sitting behind the former – something unusual, which I was told to be compulsory to prevent male students to look at them. The professor, a young man who obtained his PhD from a British university, leads the lessons sitting in front of the class. In the classes are normally found some posters on religious topics, such as one depicting life after death, with pictures showing the destiny of the unfaithful and portraying paradise as a place for the believer full of attractive women, beautiful cars and US dollars. All contribute to mark clearly the space as a religious one. During classes, when the professor says the name of the prophet, all the students recite after his name the phrase *salla allahu 'aleihi wa sallam*, which is what a Muslim is expected to say after Mohammed's name (may God pray on him).

One of the more interesting classes I attended was on the first companions of the prophet, and therefore on the Muslim community in its first years. All the students have the textbook – which is uncommon in Jordan, since photocopies are much cheaper and many students do not esteem much their books. Students are not normally carrying a bag nor books or notebooks, and when they have they use them as seats in the long hours they spent sitting with friends in the green alleys of the campus – and the lesson consists in the professor reading from the book occasionally stopping to make some comments or to explain difficult words. The book contains endless quotations from the Qur'an and the *ahadith* (the sayings of the prophet), which are recited by the professor and usually, in a lower tone of voice, by many students. All the classes I attended in this faculty were quiet and with no discussions at all, but this time the topic is too interesting



and many students, normally girls, from time to time interrupt the lesson asking explanations or offering their insights on how much present society differs from the idealized one of the beginnings of Islam. While the students speak the professor keeps silent, and stops them only when he thinks their arguments have gone too far. Elements of discussion are alcohol, movies and dresses that are supposedly against the teachings of Islam, and students keep adding arguments against them and those who misbehave, and from time to time when the speeches are too heated up the professor stops them and goes back to the book. To the condition of sinfulness is often opposed the one of the right doer and the professor is explicit about that, even if there is virtually no sign of any opposition or disagreement. Thus there is no proper debate, since what is debated is only the gravity of the misbehaviours but all the students, at least those who speaks, agree on the same tokens. The lessons ends when the professor claims that the true believers believe in the Islam of those days, which he opposes to the “American Islam”, and at his words the students utter their approval.

## Literature

The contacts with the faculty of literature, the first ranked in the humanities, happened very early during my fieldwork. The environment of this faculty is representative of the better faculties. The lesson I will describe here is not representative of the average lessons that are held in this faculty, yet I see it as particularly important since it represents an attempt to innovate teaching methodologies. Even in this faculty such a methodology represents a rare innovation of which the students are perfectly aware; some of them left the classes after they discovered that the exams would have been much more focused on students’ active participation, while others express all their satisfaction. The average courses are taught as said above, with little innovation and a plain adherence to textbooks from teachers, and with exams that require merely the knowledge of what the textbooks say.

The department is the one of Italian language, and the professor, of Palestinian origin, studied in Italy for some years for his PhD. He is not supported by senior members of his department, and he claims to have been excluded from important positions due to the fact that he doesn’t have someone backing him<sup>7</sup>. The course is on conversation skills, thus requires students to actively participate during classes, for examples they can be asked to speak in Italian simulating situations given by the professor. In these activities the professor sits in one of the chairs left by one student who is acting, or stands at the bottom of the room leaving the scene to the students. The students are about thirty, slightly more girls than boys; dresses are quite fashionable, all the boys are in jeans and t-shirt or shirt while girls are dressed in a western fashion, apart from two who wears the ‘*abaya*’ and only few of them are *muhajabat*.

In the first part of the lessons the students, who have been divided in groups in the previous lessons and each one of them had been given a part taken from Italian theatre pieces, are required to act. In this part the situation is quite well defined, and students have to play something which is given to them; this leads some of them to rely on learning by heart what they have to say, sometimes even without a full understanding of the text. According to the professor, learning by heart is the way of learning, at least at school level, and it is necessary to perform well at the *tawjihi*. In the second part of the lesson the professor reads some quotations that regard highly debated issues – the relationship between man and woman, censorship, and the like – and students are required to speak out their opinions. I will not discuss the contents of these debates here



for lack of time, yet the point relevant to our discussion today is that the students here are quite explicitly told to express themselves freely – even if there is always a certain degree of control, even from the professor himself who carefully avoids any talk about Jordanian politics. Even more importantly, many of them are aware of this and they share the effort of their teacher, and deliberately follow this path.

## Conclusion

Higher education is integral to the survival of the regime in Jordan. The differences we analysed in the organization of this system are to be found also at the national level, and their aim is to split youth – and indeed the entire population – in two. Of course university students are a privileged category, in comparison to Jordanian youth at large, yet this politics of *divide et impera* is to be found also on many other levels, as Brand (1999) and Shryock (2000) pointed out. This politics is designed to give the better-offs some kind of freedom – even if there is no freedom of political participation nor of debating religious issues which are highly sensitive in Jordan today – while the rest of the population is kept under tight control.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> I am talking about the Eastern Bank of the Jordanian river of course. Since the 1967 war Jordan retained control also of the West Bank (Cisgiordan) and of Jerusalem, which had centres of learning well established. The foundation of a university in Amman was part of a nation-building process undertaken by the young king Hussein. The attempt was to concentrate resources in the East Bank which was to become, only five years later, the Kingdom itself.

<sup>2</sup> This is a problem addressed by almost all the researches I found done by Jordanian students at the magisterial and doctoral level. The number of students per each course is limited and the posts are assigned with the “first come first served” method. This leads to some problems such as a student having attended a course of English I not being able to register to English II.

<sup>3</sup> Development is quite a debated issue in Jordan, as shows the recent campaign (2001-2005) *al-Urdun awwalan* (Jordan first) that promised to all Jordanians a sure access to the “developed world”. See Annika Rabo (1989, 1992) on the highly relevant relation between education and development in this country.

<sup>4</sup> The ceremony is strongly characterized by a religious (namely Islamic) fashion, although the university is open also to the Christian minority.

<sup>5</sup> Classical Arabic is not their first language. Their mother tongue is the Jordanian ‘*ammiyya* (dialect), which is similar to the vernacular of Palestine Syria and Lebanon and which is understandable by Iraqis, Egyptians and people of the Gulf. Normally all the students understand classical Arabic, but they are seldom able to express themselves fully in this language. The ability to read is more widespread, at least among university students. The writing skills are more complex to be obtained, since classical Arabic is a highly sophisticated language. These hardships are likely to grow in the foreseeable future since the use of English as a medium of scientific knowledge, business, and even family conversations (in the upper-class families) is widespread.

<sup>6</sup> For an analysis of this phenomenon, even if from a very narrow point of view, see Antoun 1989.

<sup>7</sup> These kind of claims are not rare within academies, nor they are confined to Jordan, of course. For a general analysis of the situation of professorship in the Arab world, see Sabour 1988 (which draws on Bourdieu 1984).

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